

How can I prevent colon polyps?

Researchers don't know of one sure way to prevent colon polyps. However, you might be able to lower your chances with

- eating, diet, and nutrition changes
- healthy lifestyle choices
- aspirin

Eating, Diet, and Nutrition

You may lower your chances of developing polyps by

- losing weight if you're overweight
- eating more fruits and vegetables
- eating less fatty food, red meat, and processed meat



Some research suggests that **calcium** and vitamin D may lower your chances of developing polyps. Some foods rich in calcium are milk, cheese, yogurt, and broccoli. Foods that contain vitamin D include eggs, liver, and certain kinds of fish, such as salmon. Some companies add vitamin D to milk and milk products. Also, being outside in the sunlight helps your body make vitamin D. You can also talk with your doctor about taking calcium or vitamin D **supplements**.

For safety reasons, talk with your doctor before using dietary supplements or any other nonmainstream medicine together with or in place of the treatment your doctor prescribes. Read more at www.ods.od.nih.gov and www.nccam.nih.gov.

Healthy Lifestyle Choices

You can make the following healthy lifestyle choices to help lower your chances of colon polyps:

- exercise most days of the week
- don't smoke cigarettes
- avoid drinking alcohol



Aspirin

Taking a low dose of aspirin every day might help prevent polyps. However, taking aspirin daily may cause side effects, such as bleeding in the stomach or intestines. Talk with your doctor before starting to take aspirin daily.

Points to Remember

- Colon polyps are extra pieces of tissue that grow on the lining of the colon or rectum.
- Colon and rectal cancer usually start from polyps. Over time, some polyps can become cancerous. Removing polyps can help prevent cancer of the colon and rectum.
- Most people should start colon polyp screening at age 50. African Americans should start screening at age 45. Finding and removing polyps can help prevent cancer of the colon or rectum.